

# Rambler Writes of Homes Near Belmont Chapel



MISS SARAH MARGARET SOLOMON.

IN previous rambles through the Goose creek country mention has been made of Belmont house and Belmont Chapel, and in this narrative the Rambler will relate such facts concerning those interesting places as he was able to gather in the course of a Sunday walk. It is the Rambler's habit to reach noteworthy places, not by dropping from an airplane, but by the usual ways and roads, and he likes to tell the story somewhat in the order in which it was unfolded to him. Where his travels ended in the narrative last Sunday he had made a visit to a home which he described as "a gray house on the crest of a low ridge." That was the home of John Hutchinson, his brother Thomas and the latter's large family.

On turning from the main road, which leads from Ashburn to the Washington and Leesburg turnpike, the Rambler wrote: "Half-way up the ridge and below that part of it where the ascent is steepest is a fenced-in plot, where a vegetable garden flourished till the frosty nights of October turned it gray and brown. Some fruit trees and lilac bushes are growing in the inclosure. There is also a small heap of debris to show that this was the site of a house. For a long time this was known as the Quilley Bauckman farm, and the Bauckman house, last occupied by Thomas, son of Quilley, stood where the fruit trees and the flower bushes are growing."

All through the neighborhood, and neighborhoods are extensive in rural Virginia, the people speak of Quilley Bauckman, and their voices always carry the tone which indicates that Quilley was a man who was well thought of. Hearing him so often called Quilley, the Rambler set it down that way, making the spelling fit the sound of the name as he heard it. But "Quilley" was not the Christian or baptismal name of this man. It was a nickname, and perhaps was the petname which his father and mother, or it may be his grandmother, gave to him when he was a little, flapping chap. Very likely it was the sound he made when he was called upon to tell his own name. Throughout his life, which happily was a long one, he was always "Quilley" to his friends. He was baptized Aquila. There was nothing in the kind and gentle old man's character to indicate any appropriateness in the name, for there was naught in him to suggest the eagle. It is not even likely that he had a soaring imagination or a soaring ambition. It is not even recorded that he had an aquiline nose. Perhaps he sometimes had flights of fancy, but most of us, no matter how prosaic and commonplace our baptismal names are, have such lapses from sanity now and then. But anyhow the old man's name was Aquila Bauckman.

The Rambler in passing the site of the Bauckman house, now marked by a scant show of debris and a few frail home site, to which a good many it was an ancestral home, or ancestral homestead, to which a good many people in the District and in those parts of Virginia close upon the District look back with tender thoughts. When one comes upon such an old home site it seems callous to regard it merely as a spot upon the earth or a ruin. No doubt many human beings have thought of it as the fairest spot in the world. It was the

place where bride and groom repaired for the wedding feast. Perhaps they and their friends danced the lancers, the quadrille and certainly the Virginia reel while some venerable fiddler, with a dark brown or a darker face, sat in a corner, sawed off rhythmic measures, marked time with a rough-shod foot and "called the fiddlers," or, as some folks will have it, "called the numbers."

Then, children were born there. They toddled about that garden and smelled the same sweet perfume of the purple blossoms that come to those lilac bushes every spring. Perhaps little girls sat under those gaunt, gnarled and decrepit apple trees, wove chains of daisies and dreamed bright dreams of fairy princes and golden chariots. People also died there and this little spot or this bit of landscape was the last vision of the world that they beheld. Young people, strong and happy, went far away from this old homestead to seek their fortune and perhaps some of them never went back except in their thoughts and day-dreams. There is no man or woman whose thoughts now and then do not go back to the old home, and then they can see the flower bushes, the grouping of the fruit trees, the garden, the porch and the arbor just as clearly as such things can be painted. So, a good many reflections came to the Rambler as he passed the spot where once had been a home. But the old house was left by those who loved it. It became crooked and infirm. It went the way of everything that man sets up, whether he builds with sand or planks or granite, and now only a little heap of debris and a few apple trees and lilac bushes mark where it stood.

Aquila Bauckman died in 1868. The baptismal name of his wife was Emily, but her surname has passed from the Rambler's memory. The children of Aquila and Emily Bauckman were John W., George, Laura, Susan, Eleanor and Emily. John W. Bauckman married Miss Ella Johnson, George married Susan Moran, Laura became the wife of Frank Myers, Susie was wedded to Henry Feaster, Nellie to Wm. La Feavers and Emily to Wm. Green. John W. Bauckman, son of Aquila, lives at Park Lane, Va., nearly opposite Georgetown. His daughter, Orra Perkins, lives in Washington; her daughter, Edna Brian, lives in this city and her children, Emma and Robert Brian, also live here. John Bauckman's other children, grandchildren of Aquila, are Eppa Bauckman of Quantico, John of Fort Myer Heights, Aquila, Shirley, Birdie Hall and Jennie Avery of Washington and Erie Vines of Alexandria.

In the first of these rambles in the Goose creek country—that is in which the Rambler left the cars at Belmont station and reviewed a part of the history of the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire railroad—he wrote: "On a hill nearby where passes a road that comes from the historic fields of Chantilly stands the old home of Wm. Lefever, who sleeps in a quiet cemetery at Leesburg and whose wife was Nellie Bauckman of Loudoun. Joseph A. Butler whose wife was Miss Isabel Weaver, owns the place now."

Resuming the march north along the road leading from Ashburn to the Leesburg pike and in the direction of Belmont Chapel and Belmont House, the Rambler stopped at a cottage framed in shrubbery. It must be an enticing place to rest at on a blue-and-silver day in summer, and the Rambler found it a pleasant place on a gray-and-golden day in autumn. It is really one of the Havener homes,

of which there are many in Loudoun and Fairfax counties, for the Havener family is an ancient and a large one in northern Virginia. The Rambler was told by all the folk he met at the railroad station at Ashburn that he should not pass this house without stopping. The postmaster, the station agent, the doctor, the blacksmith, the storekeeper and all the other citizens of prominence urged him to stop there because it was also the home of Mrs. Sweedy, a venerable woman whose memory was long and clear. They said she could remember when Belmont Chapel was built and knew Miss Margaret Mercer, who kept the academy at Belmont House and was the founder of the chapel; that she knew the Kepharts, fashier, brothers and sisters of Eugenia Kephart, who for many years conducted a seminary for young ladies and Belmont House after the death of Miss Mercer; she could remember when many mills whirled on Goose creek and canal boats passed along the picturesque waterway; she could remember when the Washington-to-the-West stagecoaches rolled along the pike, and she could remember when the first train rumbled over the rails of the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire railroad. And it was so. Mrs. Sweedy was at home. The Rambler "took her picture," but there was too much light or not enough light, the plate was overexposed, underexposed, overdeveloped or underdeveloped, it was light-struck or dark-struck or the camera moved or the model moved. At any rate, one of those many things that can happen did happen, to render the efforts of the photographer futile.

Some of the facts which this kind-faced sprightly woman, born in 1834, told the Rambler will find their places in these sketches when the chapel and the great house of Belmont are reached. Mrs. Sweedy was born Lydia A. Murray, a daughter of William Murray, who was a son of David Murray of Loudoun. Her father was a cooper and the making of barrels and hogheads was one of the early industries of the wooded regions of Loudoun county. Lydia Murray married Charles Sweedy, and their children are Annie Elizabeth, Lary Lavenia, William Henry, Emille, Rosina and Ida. The first three are living. Annie Elizabeth married Edgar Bentley Havener, son of Thomas Adam Havener, and their children were Dora, who died in infancy; Ada, deceased; Jessie Catherine, who married Henry Tillett of Loudoun and is now a widow; Pearl, who married E. M. Jenkins and who lives near Great Falls; Charles T., who married Effie Page of Loudoun, and who lives at Ballston; Gloria, who married Robert S. Jenkins; Earl J., who married Elizabeth Keys of Loudoun and who lives near Ashburn; Mary, who married Lemuel Euckling of Rockville, Md.; Sarah Lucinda, who married Walter Shanholtz of the Ashburn district; Margaret May, who married Bernard Atwell of Belmont; Edwin Franklin Havener, corporal of Company C, 318th Infantry, in France, and Ethel, who died in childhood. Mary Lavenia Sweedy married Jesse A. Poole of Loudoun, and they are now living in Oklahoma. William Henry Sweedy married first Miss Ida Croson of Fairfax county and he married a second time, but the name of the wife is not decipherable in the Rambler's notes.

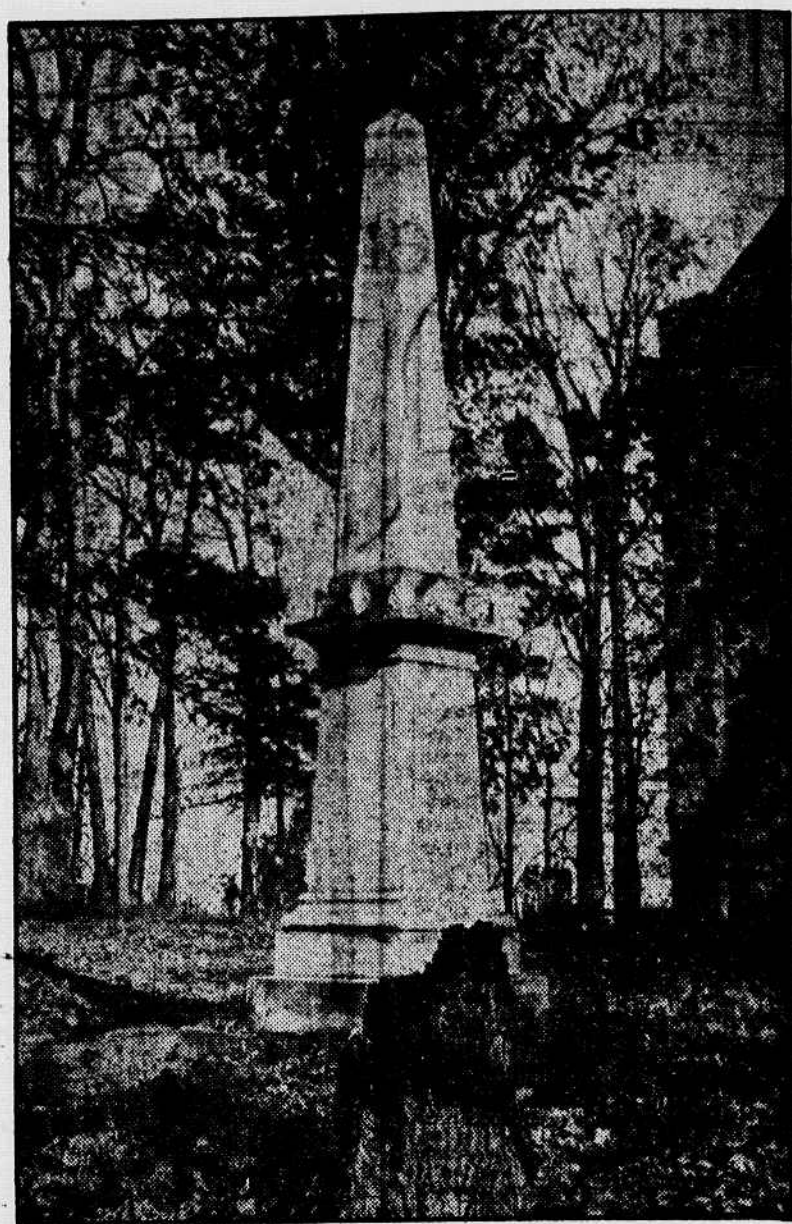
From the Sweedy-Havener home northward the road makes two sharp turns, one to the west and the other to the north. The country is clear and rolling, but on the left at a distance of about a third of a mile is a hill of no great elevation and covered with a thick growth of trees. They are principally oaks, but a few cedars stand among them. All the leaves have not fallen, and through rifts in the foliage, even at that distance, one may see the outlines of a small church-like structure. It is Belmont Chapel.

Directly off the left of the road lives a quaint woman. Everybody in that part of Loudoun knows her, and she not only knows everybody for a radius of several miles, but also knows the names of their parents and grandparents. Two or three Sundays ago, in his reference to Coton farm, one of the early Lee plantations in Loudoun, the Rambler wrote: "Lewis Burch's farm of Coton and other holdings, including a small tract on the pike owned by George Solomon, blacksmith and wheelwright, which he inherited from his father, William Solomon, were bought by John Guthrie Hopkins, one of the richest men to come to Virginia for a home-seat." Mr. Hopkins needed the site of that blacksmith shop. It made a break in the lines of his great estate.

George Solomon passed away and his daughter, Sarah Margaret, would not sell. It was her home. Money was no object. Finally, Mr. Hopkins traded with her. He gave her a small farm on another road, but not far away. He repaired the dwelling house on the new farm, and there Miss Sarah Margaret Solomon lives today. At the point where her house faces the Ashburn road a rough and crooked lane, very little traveled and for the most part upgrown in weeds and wild flowering plants leads to the hill crowned with oaks, tall cedars and the churchlike structure. The way is covered with blackberry vines, whose leaves have been stained red by the frost, and by goldenrod that has changed from yellow to white.

When you come to the front of the church you stand before a tall marble monument darkened by the shadows of the trees and mottled with those dark patches which come upon marble tombs. It stands at a distance of about ten yards from the church door, and the inscription, which is on the church side, reads: "Sacred to the memory of Margaret Mercer, born July 1, 1791, died September 17, 1846. Her remains repose beneath the chancel of this chapel, built by her own self-denying labors. This monument is erected by her pupils as a testimony of their admiration of her elevated Christian character and of their gratitude for her invaluable instruction."

Miss Mercer's remains were laid



MONUMENT TO MISS MARGARET MERCER AT BELMONT CHAPEL.

beneath the chancel of the chapel, but rest now in her own part of Virginia, which is somewhere down in the Rappahannock country. Eight years after interment her remains were removed by kindred.

At the rear of the chapel is a cemetery, in which generations of the dwellers in the Goose creek region rest. It is inclosed by a wire fence and the old gate which marks the entrance to this holy acre creaked painfully as the Rambler opened it and entered. Above the graves rise oaks, many of which may be truly said to be great and venerable trees. Their rough boughs were for the most part bare of leaves, but to some of the trees brown and russet leaves still clung and here and there was a branch tufted with dark red leaves. Mingled with the oaks were a number of dogwood trees, their foliage still a-glow and their berries suggesting tiny jets of brilliant flame. Over all the ground lay a deep mat of periwinkle, and so long and prosperously has it grown there that many grave-stones lie hidden under the glossy green vines. The people who have found sepulcher in this chapel may number thousands, but there are by no means that number of inscribed memorials. Scores of the graves are marked by those little pieces of country rock so familiar in the rural cemeteries in the country around Washington.

In the jungle of pious periwinkle the first sad object which one comes on after passing the old gate with the rusty hinges is a gray paling fence on which the years have left their mark. Within a dogwood sapling has grown up and its red leaves hang around and overhang a slab of marble inscribed "Columbus Walker, born November 14, 1837, died January 16, 1911, and Julia A. Walker, born 1835, died January 23, 1911." The Rambler jotted down in his notes the following epitaphs:

Sacred to the memory of Wm. Dove, died Aug. 25, 1817, aged 61 years; George William, son of John and Betty Dove, died July 7, 1871, aged 28 years; Sacred to the memory of our father, John Dove, born March 31, 1823, died Sept. 4, 1904; Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth Dove, born Oct. 27, 1814, died July 25, 1885; Sacred to the memory of Jessie M. Dove, beloved daughter of John and Elizabeth Dove, born May 1, 1874, died Feb. 1, 1916; Carroll P., son of H. H. and A. V. Downs, died Nov. 8, 1906, aged 18 years; Elizabeth Anders, died Sept. 27, 1908, in her 67th year; Conrad Keim, 1800-187; May J. Keim, 1879-1879, and Hallie V. Keim, 1870-1903.

Behind a big boxbush is a tomb on which the names of members of a family well known in Loudoun are inscribed. The inscriptions are "Luther A. Thrasher, born March 1, 1810, died September 24, 1881; Elizabeth Thrasher, born February 10, 1820, died October 1, 1892; James H. Thrasher, born April 7, 1856, died January 20, 1893; Thaddeus A. Thrasher, born April 13, 1862, died February 9, 1893; Robert Lee Thrasher, born April 2, 1853, died December 17, 1893."

One little tombstone is inscribed "Thomas Benton, son of B. and S. Taylor, born October 20, 1874, died November 14, 1874." The oldest tomb which the Rambler came upon in this grim garden of bones and periwinkle was that inscribed "Elizabeth, consort of Thomas D. Allnutt, born December 15, 1781, died June 28, 1854, aged seventy-two years, six months and thirteen days." Another tomb, standing so far apart from the others that it might be said to stand alone, is one inscribed "In memory of George W. Hunter, born 1813, died August 14, 1873."

Gravestones are always solemn, lonely places, and country graveyards that lie at a considerable distance from a public road are especially so, and the quietude of the burial ground of Belmont Chapel seemed to be ac-

centuated, if that is a good word to use in association with silence, by the sound of a solitary woodpecker drilling in an oak tree and a jay perched in a tall cedar in one corner of the graveyard, and that now and then uttered its strident cry.

Miss Margaret Mercer, who, according to her epitaph, built the chapel "by her own self-denying labors," dedicated it to religion with the proviso that ministers of all denominations might preach and that congregations of all Christian creeds might worship there, with the exception of a certain branch of the Baptists. As the Rambler's memory serves him, it was that sect called the Old School Baptists to which she objected. At least that is the story of Miss Mercer and the chapel which is told by the oldest people in the county. This was because of some antipathy which Miss Mercer felt toward a particular Old School Baptist minister active in the neighborhood at the time of the founding of the chapel.

Miss Mercer was an Episcopalian and because the devout of that denomination have perhaps made greater use of the chapel than the Methodists or the Presbyterians, it seems to be regarded by many persons in the neighborhood as an Episcopal chapel in which other denominations may hold service when their hours of worship do not conflict with the hours set apart for service by the Episcopalians. No services have been held in the little chapel for some time. The first minister there, so far as the memory of the oldest inhabitant goes, was a Rev. Mr. Adie of the Episcopal Church, who ministered to the spiritual needs of the people of the Goose creek neighborhood in the time of Miss Mercer. Other Episcopal ministers recalled by people who live thereabout are Rev. Mr. Durkee and Rev. Burkart. The last minister to hold service there was Rev. Mr. Ridout of the Episcopal Church.

Among the Methodist ministers who have preached in the little chapel were Rev. Mr. Hinks, Rev. George Carter, Rev. Mr. Simpson, Rev. William Berry, Rev. John Maxwell, Rev. Benjamin Shreve and Messrs. Bell, Potts, Foote and Nixon, also of the Methodist Church.

The nearest habitation to the chapel is one that stands at some distance back from the rough and little traveled lane into which the Rambler turned from the Ashburn road near the house of Sarah Margaret Solomon. A trace of a road leads from the chapel grounds to a house where two women dwell alone and in harmony. They are Miss Julia A. Benjamin and Miss Sadie Virginia Benjamin, daughters of John Benjamin, who married Harriet Ann Hardy of Loudoun. The memories of these women go back to the time when the academy which Miss Mercer conducted passed to the keeping of Miss Eugenia Kephart. That academy was maintained in Belmont house.

Standing on the edge of the grove of trees which hold the old chapel in their embrace, and looking to the west, the eye will follow a way across the fields that is marked by two lines of cedar trees. That lane leads up a hill, and there among a scattered cluster of trees, aged cedars, spruce and box, the walls, roof and chimneys of a mansion of brick rise above the tree-tops. That is Belmont house, and the Rambler next Sunday will tell of his visit there and perhaps may reach that part of his narrative which will tell of the Goose Creek Navigation Company, organized in 1832, and which was one of the early and ambitious efforts toward the improvement of inland navigation in the Potomac valley.